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File

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

DATE: November 21, 1977

PLACE: Edificio Libertad, Navy Headquarters

SUBJECT: Courtesy Call on Admiral Massera

PARTICIPANTS: Argentina: Admiral Emilio Massera
Foreign Minister Oscar A. Montes
Ambassador Jorge Aja Espil

U.S.: Secretary Cyrus Vance
Ambassador Raul Castro
Assistant Secretary Terence Todman

Department of State, AGCIS/NS/SPR

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Admiral Massera recalled with pleasure having met the Secretary during his previous service in Washington. In response to the Secretary's transmittal of greetings from Admiral Hollaway, Admiral Massera described him as a good friend with whom he had met at Mar del Plata and several other places. He expressed pleasure at being able to receive Secretary Vance and said he was sure that things would be worked out well in the Secretary's conversation with Admiral Mohtes.

Foreign Minister Montes stated that there was almost agreement on nuclear matters. He added that military cooperation had to be discussed, for it was necessary for Argentina to get a definite indication of U.S. intentions in this area so that Argentina could decide where it should go for military supplies.

Secretary Vance described the nuclear agreement as important for all concerned, not just the two countries, but the hemisphere and the world. He said he would like to see military relations continue and improve, but it is tied to human rights considerations. The only way to restore military cooperation would be to resolve the human rights problem. He said that issues would be discussed in depth with Foreign Minister Montes. It was particularly important to reach some understanding on this, because during its last session, the U. S. Congress had decided that in the absence of progress in the human rights field in Argentina, the Executive would be prohibited from making any military sales to this country. He hoped that there could be a breakthrough

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and enough of an improvement to reestablish cooperation. He knew that there was particular concern about spare parts. He thought that the United States had tried to meet Argentine requests on a case-by-case basis and had recently been able to provide some Chinook helicopters, C-130's and periscopes. However, the new legislation would cut off even that. He hoped progress could be made to keep this from happening.

Admiral Massera said he respected the U. S. position. He hoped we would understand that Argentina views the problem differently. He recognized that things in Argentina had not always been correct and that Argentina would have to "wash its face," but the resolution of the problem would also open up on U. S. understanding.

Foreign Minister Montes said he would show Secretary Vance confidential documents regarding Timerman and the Deutsch family and the right of option. Massera said if he looked at the human rights problem in strictly Navy terms he would not have very much involvement, but he had a responsibility to help with what was an Army problem and thus to some extent a national problem.

Secretary Vance said we understand the problems which Argentina had faced with terrorism. This was a growing problem throughout the world. One only had to look at the daily headlines to appreciate this. International cooperation is needed. He was, therefore, pleased at the resolution adopted by consensus in the United Nations on highjacking. He hoped all countries would now sign the Hague and Montreal Conventions. He knew there had been excesses with regard to terrorism, but this could not justify the use of inhuman measures in combatting terrorism. There are several problems in the human rights area which arise, such as the number of detainees, where they were jailed, and what has happened to people who have disappeared. In this connection, he had a list which would be passed through channels to the Argentine Government. He could not vouch for the names, but he could say the list was compiled by responsible organizations. Secretary Vance said he understood the right of option had been reinstated but few people had exercised it so far. He added that he did not know whether what he had heard about continuing torture was true or not, but the stories did raise concern in the United States and elsewhere and caused strains in our relations and prevents the development and restoration of the good, constructive relations we had had in the past.

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Admiral Massera said that developing understanding requires the desire of both parties, and it was most important for the United States to try to understand Argentina. Argentina had decided not to participate in the recent UNITAS exercise. Some other South American countries were being influenced by the Argentine position and felt the same way Argentina did although they may not have said so. Argentina does not wish to lead an anti-U.S. movement. It never has. But when the United States cuts military aid and cooperation, then Argentina is placed in a difficult position and has to act to protect its interest. He hoped that this matter would be discussed fully with Admiral Montes.

Secretary Vance said he wants to listen to everything that Argentina has to say and to understand as much as possible. His main interest is in improved relations.

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